



Issue 8

Published for the servicemembers of Kandahar Air Field

October 20, 2003

They're not called "NOMADS" for Nothing

Story and photo by Spc. C. Elijah Spencer

211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Kandahar, Afghanistan -- The Chinook is a tandem rotor helicopter that is 48 feet long and weighs 50,000lbs. Its rotors span an impressive 60 ft. in length and they whip through the air with a reverb so deep that it rattles your chest while in flight. It can carry up to 26,000lbs on its three external hooks, or two Highly Mobile Multi-Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV), or 28 fully combat loaded troops internally. As reliable, resilient, and dependable as the Chinook may be, it pales in comparison to the character and quality of the soldiers that operate them.

G Company, 104th Aviation Regi-



Soldiers at Shkin load up an awaiting Chinook during a re-supply mission.

ment of the Pennsylvania and Connecticut National Guard "NOMADS" has been on active duty since February 13, 2003. The troops of G Co. spent two months at Ft. Dix, N.J., two months in Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, one month in Qatar, and so far, six months here in Kandahar. Despite the long journey across the globe and the uncertainty of when they will go home, the Nomads have not tired. They have managed to set the standard for Army Aviation support for

Task Force Nighthawk.

The mission of the Nomads is to provide cargo helicopter support through Task Force Nighthawk to the entire Coalition Joint Task Force (CJTF) 180 area of responsibility. They have also been tasked to provide air-assault support, equipment and personnel movement capabilities, sling-load operations, and helicopter recovery missions.

"The Chinook is a very reliable

See **NOMADS** pg.3

Shkin; In the Line of Fire

Story by Staff Sgt. Dave S. Thompson Photos by Spc. C. Elijah Spencer

211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Sgt. Juan Roman keeps watch over his area while on patrol

Shkin, Afghanistan -- The early morning silence is shattered by the piercing rumble of Chinook helicopters as they touch down on the rocky landing pad outside Shkin Firebase. Aircrewmembers scramble to offload food and supplies for the troops occupying this remote outpost. Up-armored humvees surround the landing pad; their 50 caliber machine guns ready to blaze death on anyone foolish enough to chance an encounter. High above the fifteen foot mud wall that surrounds the compound, guards sit in watchtowers on every

corner, scanning the rugged landscape with high powered binoculars. Apache gunship helicopters circle overhead like winged predators. The menacing thunder of their rotors daring the enemy to try something...anything, as they watch over the hasty offloading of the vulnerable Chinooks.

Shkin, Afghanistan has been called the "most evil place on the planet." Like so many Afghan towns, it is a desolate, remote hamlet in the Paktika Province of southeastern Afghanistan. Just a

See **Fire** Pg. 8

From the Top

Leverette wins heavyweight bronze medal

By Tim Hipps

TOLEDO, Ohio (Army News Service, Oct. 9, 2003) – Staff Sgt. Charles Leverette had a lot of expectations going into the 2003 National Police Athletic League Boxing Championships Sept. 22-27 at SeaGate Convention Center in Toledo, Ohio.

Basheer Abdullah, coach of the Army World Class Athlete Program boxing team, tabbed Leverette captain for the tournament and asked that he exhibit leadership in the ring like he does for troops.

Abdullah said he would accept nothing less than a bronze medal for Leverette, whose wife, Lushanda, was expecting their second child during the tourney.

"I told her last week before I left: 'Hey, don't go into labor until I win this tournament,'" Charles said.

Leverette, a combat engineer from Brent, Ala., delivered a bronze medal in the 201-pound division at Toledo. Four days later, Lushanda delivered a baby boy at Fort Carson, Colo., on the eve of Charles' scheduled trip to Sweden to compete for the United States in a dual competition.

Leverette was replaced at the 11th hour on Team USA's roster.

"They took me off the team for the trip to Sweden to stay home with my wife and baby boy, so I guess I'll wind up fighting in Russia



Staff Sgt. Charles Leverette wins a bronze medal in the heavyweight division of the 2003 National Police Athletic League Boxing Championships

or Ukraine somewhere down the road," said the proud father of 5-pound, 14-ounce Jaden.

Leverette has climbed the United States' heavyweight rankings from 10th to sixth since leaving Fort Hood, Texas, two years ago to join the WCAP at Fort Carson.

"Hopefully, when next quarter's rankings come out, I'll move up to number two or three," Leverette said.

After winning four fights, Leverette lost an 8-3 semifinal decision to gold medalist Aaron Williams of Cleveland in the National PAL Championships.

"I think he sleeps and eats Ali's Cheerios, but I'll get him," Leverette said of losing to Williams, who is ranked fourth by USA Boxing. "He moved a lot more than most heavyweights. Coach and I will sit down and analyze the tapes, see where I made my mistakes, [and then] adapt and overcome."

While Williams brings uncanny quickness to the ring,



Mountain Warrior Weekly falls under the supervision of The Combined Joint Task Force 180 and is published weekly on Mondays.

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Mountain Warrior Weekly, a U.S.

Army newsletter, is produced by the 211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, U.S. Army Reserve at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan.

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Leverette comes with an awkward stalking style of boxing.

"He's not pretty, but he finds a way to pull out victories," Abdullah said. "It's hard to defend against anybody who has an awkward style because you don't know what angle the punches are coming from."

Abdullah refers to Leverette, 30, as "a late bloomer" in the boxing world. It's now or never time for the staff sergeant to make noise in the amateur ranks.

"I'm not going to say I'm at the end of the road because physically I'm able to go," Leverette said. "But as far as amateurs, the time is now."

————— NOMADS from pg. 1
and versatile bird and so are we.” said Maj. David E. Wood, Company Commander of the Nomads, from Lancaster, Penn.

The Nomads have been attached to the 101st Airborne, 82nd Airborne, and the 10th Mountain Light Infantry Division, all in one deployment.

The laundry list of missions completed with the help of the Nomads includes Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Haven Denial, and Operation Warrior Sweep. They were responsible for the majority of troop and equipment movement when the 10th Mountain Division replaced the 82nd Airborne. Since arriving in Afghanistan, the Nomads have been involved in Operation Heavy Debt and Operation Mountain Viper 1 and 2.

The 14 Chinooks that line the air strip are put to the test day after day by over sixty pilots, flying in what Wood calls, “The harshest helicopter environment known to man.”

The environmental conditions are things that they face in every mission. Given the fact that the Chinook is a very large helicopter, it has been used in numerous air assault missions that requires landing in difficult terrain and weather conditions.

“There have been times when we have had to land on areas like on the top of hills and mountains where we have to land the helicopter with only two wheels on the ground and then we would have to hover to maintain that position while we load or unload personnel or cargo.” said Cpt. Todd F. Smith, Company Executive Officer of the Nomads.

One of the other difficulties that the Nomads have had to deal with during their deployment is the movement coordination of a rather large unit.



Chinook #252 takes off from Orgun-E during a re-supply mission



Staff Sgt. James Donlin radioes to the pilots from the rear of their Chinook while in flight.

“That has to be one of the toughest challenges for us, considering where we have been, and the fact that we are a battalion sized unit. When you look at our unit, we make up roughly half of the aviation task force here at KAF.” said Wood.

The command of the Nomads work extra hard to ensure that low morale doesn’t become an issue, and so far it hasn’t become one. Yet, with all they have accomplished, the unit has not received word as to when they are going home.

“The morale of our troops is fantastic,” said Wood, “They’re a little stoic, I’m sure. But, one thing is certain among our troops; that is that they know we can’t leave here until there’s somebody trained up and ready to take our place, because our job is too important. For us to just leave here without a follow on unit, we would abandon all of the good work that we’ve already done.”

“We’ve come too far to just go out on a bad note,” said Smith, “When we leave here we’re going to leave with our dignity.”

The overall spirit of the Nomads becomes clear as Smith describes a conversation with a lower enlisted soldier of the unit.

“I was asking a soldier how he was doing the other day, and he replied

that he was fine. He said that he would stay here until next June if he had to, just as long as he knew when he was going to go home. You know? All these guys want is a date so that they can be able to count down.”

“Complacency is something that we try to keep an eye out for,” said Wood “You never know when something is going to go wrong, or something out of the ordinary is going to happen. It can be anything, and the main thing is to keep the troops sharp. The danger doesn’t necessarily have to be the Taliban, there’s a faceless, nameless enemy out there and we have to make sure that whatever it is, we are ready for it.”

Despite the long deployment, multiple movements, and harsh conditions in which the Nomads do their duty day after day, they are forever faithful to the mission and will not falter until it is completed, even if it means they go home later than expected.

“We’re proud to be here. We’re doing what is required of us for the security of our nation, and we greatly appreciate the support of our families and our employers back home.” said Wood.

If only the Chinook could haul a load as massive as the pride, duty, and honor these Nomads of G Company, 104th Aviation Regiment have.

WORLD NEWS

Bin Laden Said to Warn of Attacks in U.S.

By SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press Writer

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — In a new audio-tape aired Saturday, a voice purported to be Osama bin Laden vowed suicide attacks “inside and outside” the United States and threatened nations that are helping the American occupation of Iraq.

The speaker in the tape, broadcast throughout the Arab world by the Al-Jazeera television station, also warned Iraqis against cooperating with U.S. forces and urged youth in neighboring nations to join a jihad, or holy war, against the Americans.

“We reserve the right to respond at the appropriate time and place against all the countries participating in this unjust war, particularly Britain, Spain, Australia, Poland, Japan and Italy,” the voice said.

He added there would be “no exception for those participating from the countries of the Islamic world, and the Gulf, especially Kuwait.”

It was the first tape since one released on the eve of the second anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks - and the new message came as President Bush was on a tour of Asian nations rallying allies in the war on terrorism.

The United States is pushing more nations to send troops to Iraq to help U.S.-

led forces trying to stabilize the country. Even as U.S. troops have faced on ongoing guerrilla resistance - blamed on Saddam Hussein loyalists - a series of deadly suicide bombings has taken place in the past two months, mostly in Baghdad, whose authors are still not known.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan said authorities would analyze the new tape. “It is a reminder that the global war on terror continues,” said McClellan, with Bush in Bangkok, Thailand, at an economic summit. “Terrorists are enemies of the civilized world who seek to spread fear and chaos and they have no regard for innocent life.”

The Qatar-based satellite station Al-Jazeera received the recording Saturday from a “trusted source” who called and offered the audiotape, news editor Ibrahim Hilal said.

The recording was 31 minutes but the station aired only about 17 minutes of “important material, what is newsworthy,” Hilal said. The station broke up the tape into two parts, one addressed to Americans, the other to Iraqis and Arabs.

The message apparently was recorded before early September, because the speaker refers to the government of former Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, who resigned Sept. 6.

Al-Jazeera aired the message Saturday over a still photo of bin Laden, dressed in a robe and vest and a traditional flat Afghan cap.

In the portion addressed to Americans, the speaker said: “I tell the American people we will continue fighting you and we will continue martyrdom operations inside and outside the United States until you stop your injustice, and you end your foolishness.”

Addressing U.S. troops in Iraq, the speaker said: “Your blood will be spilled so the White House gang gets richer and the arms dealers with them, as well as the large companies involved.”

U.S. officials have noted that some tape

releases have been preludes to attacks. In an April 7 tape, a voice thought to be bin Laden exhorted Muslims to rise up against Saudi Arabia and calls for suicide attacks against U.S. and British interests.

There was no major attack, however, following the Sept. 10 message from bin Laden. In that message, al-Jazeera broadcast a videotape that contained a pair of voiceovers, one purportedly from bin Laden and the other from his deputy Ayman al-Zawahri.

The CIA said two days later that analysts believed bin Laden’s voice on the tape was probably authentic.

The message aired Saturday also derided Washington’s attempts to persuade other nations to send troops to Iraq.

“America is bogged down in the quagmire of the Tigris and the Euphrates (rivers),” the speaker on the tape said. The United States “is in real trouble, God willing, and is today screaming at the top of its lungs.”

Bush “thought that Iraq and its oil is a big treasure,” the voice said. Now he has turned to buying “mercenaries.”

There are already troops from 26 other nations in peacekeeping forces led by Britain and Poland. So far after Washington’s new call for forces, Turkey and South Korea have said they would send troops.

“I call upon all Muslims, especially Iraqis. I tell them: Do not dare support the crusading American armies and those that ally with them,” the speaker on the tape said. “Anyone that aids them, or whatever comes of them, no matter the label, is sacrilegious.”

“You young people of Islam everywhere, especially from neighboring states, and Yemen, you have to go wage jihad (holy war) and show your muscles. Follow the right path and don’t follow people who follow their whims ... who want to divert you from such a mission,” the speaker said.



SPORTS



Pettitte, Yanks reel in Series tie Lefty, long ball the stories in Game 2 win over Marlins

By Mark Feinsand / MLB.com

NEW YORK — For the third consecutive series, Andy Pettitte brought the Yankees back to life after a Game 1 loss, as New York defeated the Florida Marlins, 6-1, Sunday night in Game 2 of the World Series.

Pettitte, pitching on three days' rest, allowed one unearned run over 8 2/3 innings, leading the Yankees to a victory that evened the best-of-seven series at one game apiece. Since July 11, Pettitte has won nine consecutive starts following Yankees losses, including three in the postseason.

"So far, after Game 1, all it's been doing this postseason is adding a little more gray hair to my head, going into Game 2 and being down," Pettitte said. "But like I've said before, I'm never going to change the approach of what I want to do."

Hideki Matsui gave Pettitte all of the offensive support he would need, belting a three-run homer in the first inning. Alfonso Soriano added a two-run shot in the fourth as the Yankees cruised to an easy win.

New York has dropped the first game of each playoff series this season, only to rebound and advance past Minnesota and Boston. Pettitte restored order with Game 2 wins against the Twins and Red Sox, and he continued the trend on Sunday.

Pettitte's history on short rest in the regu-

lar season is subpar: a 2-5 record with a 4.52 ERA in 10 career starts. The postseason, however, is a different story. The southpaw entered Game 2 vs. Florida with a 2-1 mark and 3.71 ERA in four outings on three days' rest, numbers he improved upon by game's end.

"For being on three days' rest," Pettitte said, "I was just really thankful I felt as strong as I did."

Matsui capped a two-out rally in the first inning by crushing a three-run home run to center field on a 3-0 pitch after Marlins left-hander Mark Redman hit Jason Giambi and gave up a single to Bernie Williams. Matsui, who has two homers this postseason, is the first Japanese player ever to homer in the World Series.

"I got a sign that I can go ahead and swing at a 3-0 count," Matsui said through a translator. "I got a good pitch to hit and was able to get a good swing on it. Fortunately, it went out."

"You get in a situation and 3-0, if you're not going to get a strike then, then you're going to walk," said manager Joe Torre of giving Matsui the green light. "He's pretty good at being able to detect a strike, as opposed to, 'I'm going to look for a fastball and swing at it no matter where it is.' I think that's an indication of a real good hitter that knows his ability."

New York tacked on a run against Redman in the second as Juan Rivera, making his first career World Series start, doubled in Nick Johnson to give the Yankees a 4-0 lead. Redman was pulled from the game in the third after giving up four runs in 2 1/3 innings.

Soriano, mired in a 1-for-12 skid, belted a two-run home run off Rick Helling in the fourth, boosting the lead to 6-0. It was Soriano's first home run of the playoffs, the second World Series long ball of his career.

"I've been struggling at the plate, swinging at bad pitches," Soriano said. "Today, I waited for pitches in the zone and was able to hit it hard."

Pettitte breezed through the first four frames, facing the minimum 12 batters

with the help of two double plays. Miguel Cabrera reached on Aaron Boone's error to lead off the fifth, but Pettitte sat down the next three Marlins, keeping them out of the run column.

The Marlins managed a leadoff baserunner in the sixth, seventh and eighth, but Pettitte staved off any potential rallies, not allowing a Marlin past second base through the first eight innings.

As the ninth inning opened, fans chanted, "An-dy Pet-titte ... An-dy Pet-titte," perhaps recognizing that the left-hander will become a free agent after the season. The scene was reminiscent of Paul O'Neill's final game in the Bronx in the 2001 World Series.

With two outs and a man on first in the ninth, Boone committed his second error of the game. Derrek Lee followed with a single to right, ending Pettitte's shut-out bid after 8 2/3 innings and 111 pitches.

"It was a very special night to be able to stay out on the mound on the ninth inning and try to have an opportunity to go for a shutout game in the World Series," Pettitte said. "I had one other chance in 1996 and wasn't able to do it. I wish I was able to do it tonight. But it was nice."

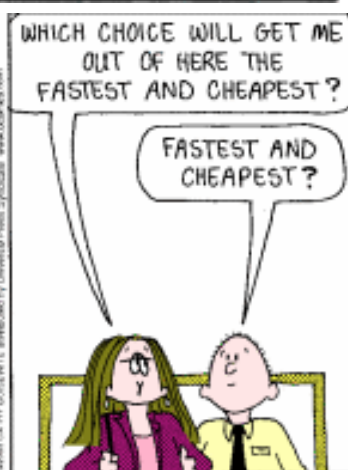
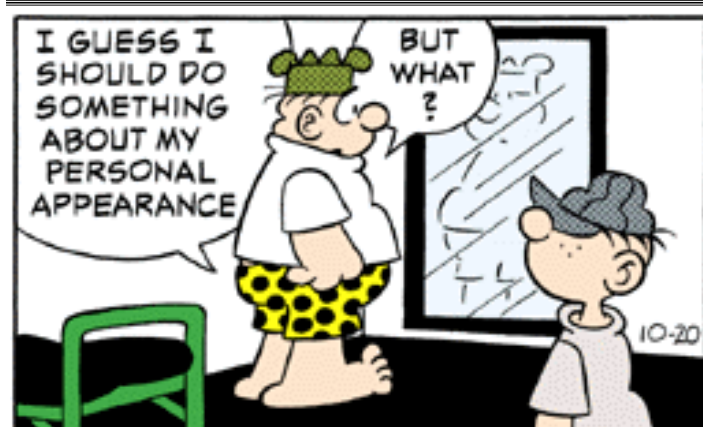
For the second straight game, the Marlins didn't manage an extra-base hit as Pettitte held Florida to just six singles, two of them of the infield variety. He struck out seven, walked one and improved to 3-0 on the postseason. Pettitte now has 13 career postseason wins, tying him with Atlanta's John Smoltz for the most in baseball history.

Pettitte was one out shy of recording the first complete-game shutout in the World Series by a Yankee since Ralph Terry did it in Game 7 of the 1962 Fall Classic.

"If you're going to split at home, I guess the best way to do it is win the second game," Torre said. "Once you start winning in postseason or any time during the year, you really get greedy. You want to put a streak together."

The Yankees get that opportunity to create a streak beginning Tuesday night, as the series shifts to South Florida for Games 3, 4 and 5.

WEEKLY COMICS



NFL WEEK 7 SCORES

Final
Baltimore (3-3-0) 1 2 3 4 T 7 0 3 16 26
Cincinnati (2-4-0) * 14 10 3 7 34

Final
New Orleans (3-4-0) * 14 21 3 7 45
Atlanta (1-6-0) 14 0 3 0 17

Final
Philadelphia (3-3-0) * 7 0 0 7 14
NY Giants (2-4-0) 0 3 7 0 10

Final OT
New England (5-2-0) * 3 3 7 0 6 19
Miami (4-2-0) 0 10 3 0 0 13

Final
Tennessee (5-2-0) * 17 10 0 10 37
Carolina (5-1-0) 0 3 0 14 17

Final
Green Bay (3-4-0) 3 7 7 7 24
St. Louis (4-2-0) * 14 7 7 6 34

Final
Denver (5-2-0) 0 7 3 10 20
Minnesota (6-0-0) * 7 7 14 0 28

Final
Dallas (5-1-0) * 7 21 7 3 38
Detroit (1-5-0) 7 0 0 0 7

Final
San Diego (1-5-0) * 6 7 10 3 26
Cleveland (3-4-0) 0 3 3 14 20

Final
Chicago (1-5-0) 3 3 0 11 17
Seattle (5-1-0) * 0 14 3 7 24

Final
Washington (3-4-0) 0 0 7 0 7
Buffalo (4-3-0) * 3 7 7 7 24

Final
NY Jets (2-4-0) * 0 7 3 9 19
Houston (2-4-0) 7 7 0 0 14

Final
Tampa Bay (3-3-0) 7 0 0 0 7
San Francisco (3-4-0) * 7 14 0 3 24

Courtesy of.



HEADLINERS

Chip Maker Finds Bombs Among Potatoes

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Workers at a Kettle Foods potato chip plant were feeding potatoes into a machine that sorts out stones and other debris this week when a 3-pound military bomb popped out.

General manager Marc Cramer said the shipment from a Pasco, Wash., farm also contained a second bomb.

Each bomb was about 8 inches long and 3 inches wide, cylindrical in shape with fins on one end.

Police determined they were dummy military ordnance left over from a time when the military used the farm as a practice bombing range.

The bombs had contained a pyrotechnic charge to create a flash to show bombardiers-in-training where the projectile landed.

"We talked to the farmer and he said they find these all the time," Salem police Lt. Dave Okada said. "They usually pick them out before sending the potatoes on."

Cramer said Kettle Foods has a painstaking inspection process to cull all debris from potatoes.

"We did find a cell phone once," Cramer said. "If it's a muddy day when they're harvesting, everything's covered in mud."



Two Charged in Junkyard Prostitute Ring

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A couple have been charged with operating a prostitution ring from an auto junkyard, where police said some women waited before being sent out when customers called.

"This is the first time we've found anything like this inside a junkyard. Most places will say it's a massage parlor or adult entertainment," police Sgt. Richard Curry said.

Owner Russell Coleman, 42, and his girlfriend Brenda Brush, 51, of West Jefferson, dispatched the prostitutes from RC's Auto Salvage in suburban Grove City, Curry said. They were charged Tuesday with one count each of promoting prostitution and were freed on bond.

No one answered the telephone at the salvage yard Thursday, and Coleman and Brush have unlisted numbers.

At least five prostitutes were involved, charging \$150 an hour, of which \$50 went to Coleman, Curry said. When the junkyard closed at 6 p.m., calls for prostitutes funneled into Coleman's home, he said.

Police had been investigating the operation since January and stepped up efforts in June after several neighbors complained about traffic and noise from the junkyard.



Judge Said to Pen a Rap in Eminem Ruling

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. (AP) — A judge has dismissed a defamation lawsuit filed by a former schoolmate of rapper Eminem - and she included a rap of her own to explain the ruling.

In a footnote to the opinion issued Friday, Judge Deborah Servitto added a 10-stanza rhyme, The Macomb Daily reported in Saturday's editions.

The verse stated, in part: "It is therefore this Court's ultimate position, that Eminem is entitled to summary disposition."

DeAngelo Bailey claimed that Eminem slandered him in the song "Brain Damage" from his 1999 disc "The Slim Shady LP."

The lyrics include: "I was harassed daily by this fat kid named DeAngelo Bailey. An eighth-grader who acted obnoxious, 'cause his father boxes. So every day he'd shove me into the lockers."

In the judge's opinion, however, Eminem's lyrics are "stories no one would take as fact, they're an exaggeration of a childish act."

Bailey, 32, had sought \$1 million from Eminem, 31, whose real name is Marshall Mathers III.

Bailey's attorney Byron Nolen said he was surprised at the ruling and its accompanying verse. "I don't know how the Court of Appeals would look at something like that," he said.

Fire from pg.1

stone's throw from the northwestern border of Pakistan, it is a breeding ground for every would be criminal, hoodlum, or so called "freedom fighter" with anti-American sentiment. Allied with pro-Taliban guerrillas, these rag-tag forces cross the porous border in groups of five to ten and stage small-scale attacks on U.S. forces, then retreat into the mountains behind the Pakistani border.

Their methods are disorganized and largely ineffective as the American forces opposing them, present an overwhelming disruption to their ability to wage war. These anti-Coalition Forces MO is to set up improvised demolition charges and remotely activated rockets in hopes that one of them finds a mark. Then they disappear into the inhospitable badlands that dominate the region. In recent months however, these rebels have stepped up their operations, and encounters with U.S. forces have become more common. But, the Americans are familiar with the insurgent's game and on Shkin Firebase, the best have been assembled to combat this threat.

Shkin Firebase could hardly be considered a kind and gentle place. What once was a local farmer's central dwelling, now shelters United States Army infantrymen from the 1/87th Infantry Brigade and Artillerymen from the 3/6th Field Artillery out of Ft. Drum, NY. The compound, save for a few improvements, is essentially unchanged from its original configuration. Replete with mud huts with tin roofs and dirt floors, luxuries such as running water and electricity brought in by the soldiers, were unheard of prior to their arrival here. A lone television set placed in a building that doubles as the dining facility and MWR shack, is as much out of place as the high tech surveillance equipment housed in the ramshackle command center. Here, commanders and leaders congregate to pour over battle plans and view video screens projecting images of the mountains and kill zones just outside their compound.

Major Paul Wille, call sign Summit Three, is the commander of the firebase. Sporting a meticulously trimmed flat-top, his soft spoken demeanor exudes a calm confidence and the self assuredness necessary to lead

men in this war-ravaged district. His piercing eyes leave little doubt of the commitment he shares to rid the region of the insurgent activity that has all but crippled reconstruction efforts here.

"We are facing a combination of pro-Taliban fighters and al Qaeda insurgents from all over," said Wille. They are largely Afghans from the old regime, but we are also seeing fighters from Pakistan and as far as China."

On this day, a fierce clash with Taliban rebels has claimed the life of one of Wille's men and injured two others. The sadness felt throughout the base for the fallen soldier is only exceeded by the seething rage directed toward those who



Pfc. Brian Moncayo displays an AK-47 acquired from a traffic checkpoint

took his life. PFC Carl Severe from Ft. Lauderdale, FL., an infantryman on guard duty during the skirmish, pleads with his squad leader to replace him with someone else so he can go hunt down those responsible for his team member's death.

Surrounding the base, four artillery gun points stand at the ready. The Artillerymen scan the landscape, patiently looking for enemy targets. All about them, crates containing an assortment of ordinance, litter the area. The anticipation and excitement in the air is palpable as the men fight to control the rush of adrenalin that comes with battle. Suddenly, at firing point number one, Staff

Sgt. David Dixon and his gun-crew receive orders to "fire for effect." Moving with great speed and expertise, the men work in unison to load up the big gun and adjust fire to the new coordinates. Dixon calmly watches on then inspects the gun before giving the order to fire. With an earth shattering boom, the howitzer erupts, sending the projectile screaming down range where it explodes in the distance, kicking plumes of dust into the air.

Sgt. Paul Fluharty is Dixon's assistant chief and primary gunner. As he lunges to grab another round and slam it into the gun, his thoughts are far removed from his home in Northshores, PA. His pregnant wife is due to give birth to a son in January, but right now, he is completely focused on laying down fire in support of his fellow soldiers out in contact with the rebel forces.

"One day, when this place is free from all the hostility and people can live without fear, I will tell my son that we had a part in it," said Fluharty, waving his hand to include his team mates. For Dixon, an articulate native of Brooklyn, NY, it's all about the mission and taking care of his men.

"We are under daily rocket attacks here," he said. "Only last week, one came over the wall and landed within 15 feet of where we were standing. It feels good to be able to launch rounds back at them. Only ours are much more accurate."

As he points to some fifteen notch marks on the howitzer, each representing a confirmed kill, Dixon regales the time honored history of the "Redlegs" (Artillery) and praises his men for the job they are doing.

"This is a high stress environment," he stated. "My guys have been manning this gun around the clock for over three months now. They could use a break." Sgt. Dixon said that most troops get rotated to other, "less stressful" locations after three months, but was uncertain when he and his team would be leaving Shkin. Dixon was quick to point out that as long as he and his men were there, his gun would be ready to "rock and roll" when called upon.

Driving over the harsh terrain in an Up-Armored Humvee, 2nd Lt. David Th-

continued on next pg.

Fire continued

Thompson barks commands and grid-coordinates in animated tones over the radio handset glued to his ear. He pauses in mid sentence as an artillery round impacts with a deafening blast, temporarily impairing his ability to hear. He is the platoon leader of A company, 1/87 Infantry Battalion, and has been out with his team battling the rebels for some four hours. Riding in a Humvee in front of him, Sgt. Jose Roman acknowledges the message from Thompson and tells his driver to adjust course. Since arriving in Afghanistan the first week of August, Roman and his squad have been out on over seventy patrols.

"Not all of them are this action packed," Roman says in his Brooklyn accent. "I just want to nail the bastards that shot our guys." This is his second tour of duty in Afghanistan and his experience on the battlefield is evident as he hastily plugs coordinates into his hand held GPS on route to intercept the retreating enemy. His wife is also expecting a baby boy in November, but for now, thoughts of home will have to wait until the battle wanes and he and his men are back inside the mud walls of Shkin

Firebase.

Perched atop the speeding Hummer with Roman, his fingers clutching the handles of a .50 caliber machine gun, Private First Class Brian Moncayo's head swivels from side to side, searching the landscape for signs of movement. The barrel of the M2 still smoking hot from the 1400 rounds he expended through it moments before. His friend Evan O'neal, the soldier killed in action, had bunked directly across the room from him and it was payback time.

By the time Lt. Thompson and his troops pull into the fortified gates of the firebase, some eight Taliban fighters have been killed and a number of others wounded. The sun has long since set behind the mountain in the west. The restless soldiers, still abuzz with the excitement of the day's battle, sit and talk as only soldiers can. They have survived another battle, yet they know there will be many others before the war is over. They talk in silent tones about Evan O'neal and relive the memories of him they will forever treasure. The bond between these men can not be expressed in words, but only by the look upon their

faces.




"We will win this war," said Major Wille, as he gathers around his men, embracing their spirit and letting them know what a superb job they did. The pride and love he has for these men is clearly evident as he shakes their hands then leaves them to the solitude they have earned. Moments after, he is on the phone chewing some one out for not having adequate food for his men to eat.

"...you tell them they better send the (expletive) gravy for the biscuits, the (expletive) butter for the corn, the (expletive) desert and ice cream! My men are out here working their asses off, putting their lives on the line and they will get the food they deserve, by God. IS THAT CLEAR!"

As the night guards stare through their NVGs, looking out onto the barren Afghan landscape towards the Pakistani border, an eerie calm engulfs the atmosphere around the base. For now, all is quiet and peaceful, and the guards enjoy the silence for as long as it lasts. But they know that this is Shkin, Afghanistan, the most evil place on the planet, and calm only lasts for a little while.

Courtesy of the weatherchannel.com

Weekly Weather Forecast

Tonight		Clear	45°	0 %
Oct 13				
Tue		Mostly Sunny	79°/46°	0 %
Oct 14				
Wed		Mostly Sunny	79°/42°	0 %
Oct 15				
Thu		Sunny	77°/43°	0 %
Oct 16				

Fri		Sunny	83°/51°	0 %
Oct 24				
Sat		Sunny	83°/50°	0 %
Oct 25				
Sun		Sunny	84°/48°	0 %
Oct 26				
Mon		Sunny	83°/48°	0 %
Oct 27				

"Weekly Quote"

"When war does come, my advice is to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard."
- General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson

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Kandaharpresscenter@yahoo.com

WHAT MAKES THE WARRIOR TOC TICK?

Story by Capt. Kevin K. Dasher
211th Public Affairs Detachment

TOC, in Army parlance, is the acronym for Tactical Operations Center. It is the nervous system for the body of the units that make up Coalition Joint Task Force (CJTF) Warrior. The TOC is a cacophony of voices and phones coupled with a multitude of people constantly on the move. The technology of computer displays, electronic maps, and plasma monitors, all rivaling the best NASA has to offer. There are over twelve different organizations and units that make up the staff inside the TOC.

Lt. Col. Mick Haydak, from Bridgeton, NJ, is the Executive Officer of CJTF Warrior. He is also the staff leader of the TOC. He has had this duty assignment for four months, but his level of experience spans many different functional areas at the company, battalion, and brigade level. His main goal is "ensuring the staff has focus." The TOC staff has "a wide variety of knowledge and expertise and sometimes you're up against time constraints," said Haydak.

These tight timelines, along with the coordination of effort among the various sections, are daunting tasks not for the faint of heart. He approaches them with a calm and focused demeanor. This part of the military decision making process is a give and take between the TOC staff and the Bri-

gade Commander, Col. William B. Garrett III. Garrett gives Haydak his guidance during their staff huddles every morning. This helps Lt. Col. Haydak to understand the commander's intent and further refine his plans for the TOC staff.

"You have to make sure the staff provides the best knowledge and the best information to enable the commander to make the proper decision," said Haydak. "The information flow is the biggest challenge [as the staff leader] because that is the main purpose of the TOC," he further elaborated. "We want all of the units [that make up the 5,000 troops of CJTF Warrior] to know that the TOC allows them to fight the close fight; to insure that everything else is taken care of around them," said Haydak. Capt. Mike Fortenberry, of Hattiesburg, MS, seconds Haydak's sentiment on the need for information.

"That is probably the single most important thing. None of us, at this level, can facilitate any operation without reliable communication. If you don't talk to me, I cannot get you what you need to kill the enemy, or save your soldiers lives." Fortenberry serves as one of three Battle Captains. He oversees the message traffic coming into the TOC from CJTF Warrior subordinate units, as well as the brigade's higher headquarters.

Fortenberry's primary focus is to give the Brigade Commander effective situational awareness in the CJTF Warrior area of operations and it's eleven firebases in the region. It's a job that means many bleary-eyed days and nights for Mike, staring at various computer monitors and projection displays.

It can become quite hectic when there are troops in contact with the enemy, however. The monotony of monitoring sporadic but continual email traffic, radio transmissions, and phone calls is instantaneously transformed into a chaotic flood of messages from the units in contact, the CJTF Warrior TOC staff and supporting units, and the brigade's higher headquarters. It now becomes a footrace to get more information on the chain of events that led up to the battle and it's current status. Time is a crucial element and people's lives hang in the balance.

The information about the conflict is only one part of the picture though, as the intelligence assessments and operational planning that became this battle are also constantly updated from this communication. "Intelligence and planning drives the operations, we sort of rely on each other," said Fortenberry.

see TOC next pg.

TOC continued

Maj. John Larvie, from Butte MT, is the Brigade Intelligence Officer, or S-2. He has done this job in both brigade and battalion sized units here, Korea, and in Europe. As far as the enemy analysis goes, Larvie views his tenure here in Afghanistan as the most fun. Having a real enemy, as opposed to the Opposition Forces at the National Training Center, makes the difference.

"We know a lot about them and we want to find them in the right place and time under the right conditions" he said. The most important aspect of the S-2's job is the enemy. "That is the one thing (we're) most concerned about. Information flow is absolutely critical. There's a lot of different media available for information dissemination," said Larvie.

"All of this brings into play things we may or may not know to confirm the enemy. We may think the enemy is there. We may look at a map and say if I were the enemy this is where I would probably go," Maj. Larvie stated. The brigade intelligence staff learns a lot from the other staff sections of the Warrior TOC and their outside contacts. "As we learn from other people and talk to other people, when they say we had this here or we heard of this, sometimes just more than one rumor can confirm the fact," he said.

The other side of intelligence analysis is the actual gathering of information directly with

boots on the ground. To do this, the brigade S-2 relies on the maneuver units of CJTF Warrior. Major Larvie realizes that there can be some frustration from the troops when they return from a mission empty handed. "The information that we get from them is absolutely critical. They get a mission to go do something and they go out and say that there's nothing there. Well the fact that nothing's there is every bit as important to me as the fact that there's something over here, because that's one less place we'll have to look," Larvie stated.

The incorporation of this intelligence gathering takes place with the missions planned by the brigade operations staff, or S-3. Captain Jeremy Gwinn, from Lititz, PA, is one of two assistant operations officers in CJTF Warrior. "Planning and coordinating operations is our primary responsibility for our deliberate operations. However, there's always other things going on that need our oversight as S-3. Patrols in the local area, civil military operations, and things like that are our forte," said Gwinn.

Gwinn has been doing this job since March, just in time for the 1ST Brigade, which became part of CJTF Warrior, to start deployment from their home base at Ft. Drum, NY. He has experience as an infantryman in the weeds, both as a Rifle Platoon Leader for one of the first Stryker Brigades at Ft. Lewis, WA as well as being an infantry battalion headquarters Company Executive Officer. Since starting off operations in Afghanistan, the

Assistant S-3 job has gotten easier, as the TOC staff has grown together as a team and gotten to know one another on a day-to-day basis. But the desire to serve in a line unit is strong in Gwinn; "I wish I were out there with them."

Gwinn counts on the flow of information from the battle captain and other members of the CJTF Warrior TOC staff.

"I still, for the sake of situational awareness, need to roughly know what's going on. You're really only going to be successful in planning for future operations if you know what's going on right now," he said.

There are a lot more sections that make up the CJTF Warrior TOC Staff, and all of them participate in one form or another in the development of information. It is this information flow, manifesting itself in the sound of conversations, ringing telephones, radio transmissions, and the binary code of email messages that continues day and night, week in and week out. This amalgam of people, communication equipment, and computer systems is only one part of what makes up the entire team of CJTF Warrior. It's this teamwork that's taking the war to the enemy. Whenever or wherever the anti-coalition forces chooses to fight or hide, the men and women of the CJTF Warrior Tactical Operations Center stand ready to guide and provide for the battles ahead. They are truly what makes the TOC tick.

KINGS OF THE SKY



**"The chinooks own the sky's
of Afghanistan, one of our
main missions is UH-60
Blackhawk recovery"**

- CPT. Todd E. Smith



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03